



URL: www.readwritethink.org/materials/bio_cube/

All writing assignments require the writer to make decisions about what to include and what to leave out. The task seems especially daunting with biographies and autobiographies, when the author is trying to summarize an entire life. The Bio-Cube activity asks children to take on that challenge and limits their information to what will fit on six sides of a small cube. The activity helps children learn how to identify and summarize key ideas.

Here's What to Do

Begin with the Bio-Cube Planning Sheet, a printable chart linked to the opening screen that previews the information you will need. It ranges from basic background, such as name and place, to more probing subjects, such as personality traits, significance, biggest obstacle, and important quotation. Once the sheet is complete, children can transfer the information online by clicking on the six numbered blocks and filling in responses. From there, the template can be printed, folded, and taped to form a cube.

More Ideas to Try

- Use this tool after reading a biography or autobiography together. Ask children to choose bits of information that summarize and precisely describe the person. Urge them to make selections that capture the person's essence. For instance, Martin Luther King Jr. said many things, but certain quotes reveal volumes about his significance, his unique perspective, and how he lived his life.
- Because it's "all about me" in the middle and high school years, let teens examine themselves using the Bio-Cube. Consider having them make one cube that represents the present and another cube that imagines what their lives will be like in 10 years. Give this activity another twist by letting teens list pretend names instead of their real ones. Then let the group guess which cube belongs to which person.
- Boiling information down to its essentials is hard work. Try this challenge: A 2008 book asked famous and unknown authors to sum up their lives in just six words. One memorable entry: "Not quite what I was planning." Can children sum themselves up in six words? Can you?

*This tool uses the free Flash browser plug-in (version 8 or later), which can be downloaded from the ReadWriteThink [Site Tools](#) page.

To view this tip sheet online, go to www.readwritethink.org/materials/bio_cube/Bio-Cube.pdf.

Bio-Cube is adapted from McLaughlin, M., & Allen, M.B. (2002). *Guided comprehension in action: Lessons for grades 3-8*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association. Copyright 2008 IRA/NCTE. All rights reserved.

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Intended for: Grades 3-12
Ages 8-18

Technical requirements: Flash 8*

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